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THE GROWING POWER STRUGGLE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN (ZUNEHMENDER MAC--ETC(U)  
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## THE CROWING POWER STRUGGLE IN THE INDIAN OCEAN

[Chopra, Maharaj K; Zunehmender Machtkampf im Indischen Ozean, Wehrkunde, Vol. 24, No. 2, Feb. 75, pp. 68-77; German]

The fact that the Indian Ocean has been reported on so much recently, and that it has been the subject of extensive debates, indicates that new winds are blowing over its waters. In this context, the United Nations has been involved with it again and again, in contrast to another project carried out under its auspices, i.e., the Indian Ocean Expedition of 1961-1965. This Expedition, which lasted five years, and in which more than 24 nations participated, spanned the entire ocean, studied numerous phenomena and collected a mass of data. Presently, numerous research firms worldwide are processing these data, and the coastal States, as well as the world community, could make good use of them. Still, the United Nations has all but forgotten the data. Once it was knowledge and peace that mattered. Today it is power politics. When the choice is between these two obviously the decision will be in favor of power politics.

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### HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

The arrival of Vasco da Gama in 1497 represented a turning point, since it introduced a power struggle in the Indian Ocean, which, up to then, had been rather peaceful. In order to control it, the Western powers waged wars which culminated in triumph for the British, the building of the Suez Canal, the race for Africa, which overlooks the ocean, and with the rise and expansion of Japan in the East. Still, the Indian Ocean remained a "British sea" until the First World War. And then it was only a secondary theater of operations. There were two larger military conflicts in progress, which remained confined to the peripheral areas of the Middle East and East Africa; and on the high seas operations remained limited to the daring enterprises of the German raiders WOLF, EMDEN and KÖNIGSBERG.

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Notwithstanding these insignificant episodes, World War I brought far-reaching changes. Control of the Middle East, with its oil, fell to the British. As a result of the dissolution of the Ottoman Empire, numerous Arab States were formed, and the foundation of Israel was laid.

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\*Numbers in the right margin indicate pagination in the original text.

The Germans lost their colonies in Africa. The independence of Australia and South Africa could no longer be questioned. Thus the Europeans lost their last hope of consolidating in this area.

The War exposed the weakness of the commonwealth structure and broke the backbone of British hegemony. From a strategic viewpoint, England relinquished her control of the seas and the balance of power was shifted by the 1921-1922 Washington Treaties in favor of the United States and Japan.

During the Second World War, the Indian Ocean was subjected to further dangers. In East Africa, the British fought against the Italians. And in the East, with downright catastrophic results, against the Japanese. Like a typhoon, the Japanese advance overran the Allied defenses, culminating with the bombing of India and Ceylon. On the ocean itself, operations remained limited to some German privateering and to Allied efforts to save Madagascar from the Japanese.

Militarily this meant little, but its effects on the remainder of the War were catastrophic. Great Britain gave up. India, Ceylon and Indonesia became independent. In East Africa and on some islands in the Indian Ocean, revolt erupted. In the Middle East, a dictatorship arose. In 1945, the Allies encountered the Russians for the first time. This led to a rift which was prophetic of future conflicts. All of South-east Asia lay in ruins.

Immediately following the War, the superiority of the United States was undisputed, but the Americans were committed in the Pacific. Russia was utterly ravaged, France was becoming more and more entangled in Indochina, and China was experiencing a civil war. And of all the Indian Ocean States, none was in a position to perceive things on an oceanic scale. And it became quite clear that the Indian Ocean - irrespective of how the future balance of power might emerge - could no longer be ignored. In reality, one of the most important lessons of the War was that a grand, worldwide strategy had actually become an attainable goal.

The beginning of this power struggle saw the formation of a vacuum and attempts to fill it.

#### GEOGRAPHICAL RELATIONSHIPS

The Indian Ocean (see sketch) is indeed the smallest of the world's three great oceans. Its two large inlets, the Arabian Sea and the Bay of Bengal, straddle a part of the globe which was inhabited by some of the most ancient cultures, which contains dense concentrations of population, and which is blessed with abundant natural wealth. Compared to this northern part, the ocean's southern sector is indeed more spacious, but practically void - a desert akin to the Antarctic. When one speaks of strategy in the Indian Ocean, one must have a clear notion of the



extent to which this is dependent on conditions in the north. Still, as a result of recent advances, an ever greater area of the ocean is being included in the grand strategy.

Unlike the southern sector, the northern part of the ocean is vital to world trade. There is no regular land route from the Mediterranean Sea to the Pacific Ocean. And since air transport cannot handle massive cargo, there remains only the ocean to serve as the main carrier for the ever-increasing traffic.

For this reason, these connecting links, which connect the Red Sea with the Mediterranean Sea and the Malay Straits with the Pacific Ocean, play a decisive role. And, today as before, it is not surprising to find both of these areas at the center of the power struggle.

Finally, of importance are wind conditions, characterized by two monsoons, the summer monsoon and the winter monsoon, the latter comparatively tranquil. The summer monsoon brings typhoons and storms, which still are far less violent than those of the Atlantic and Pacific Oceans. Therefore, military operations in the Indian Ocean are relatively easy, which is significant insofar as the developing nations need an especially advanced navy with which to assert themselves on the high seas.

#### THE NEW FORCES

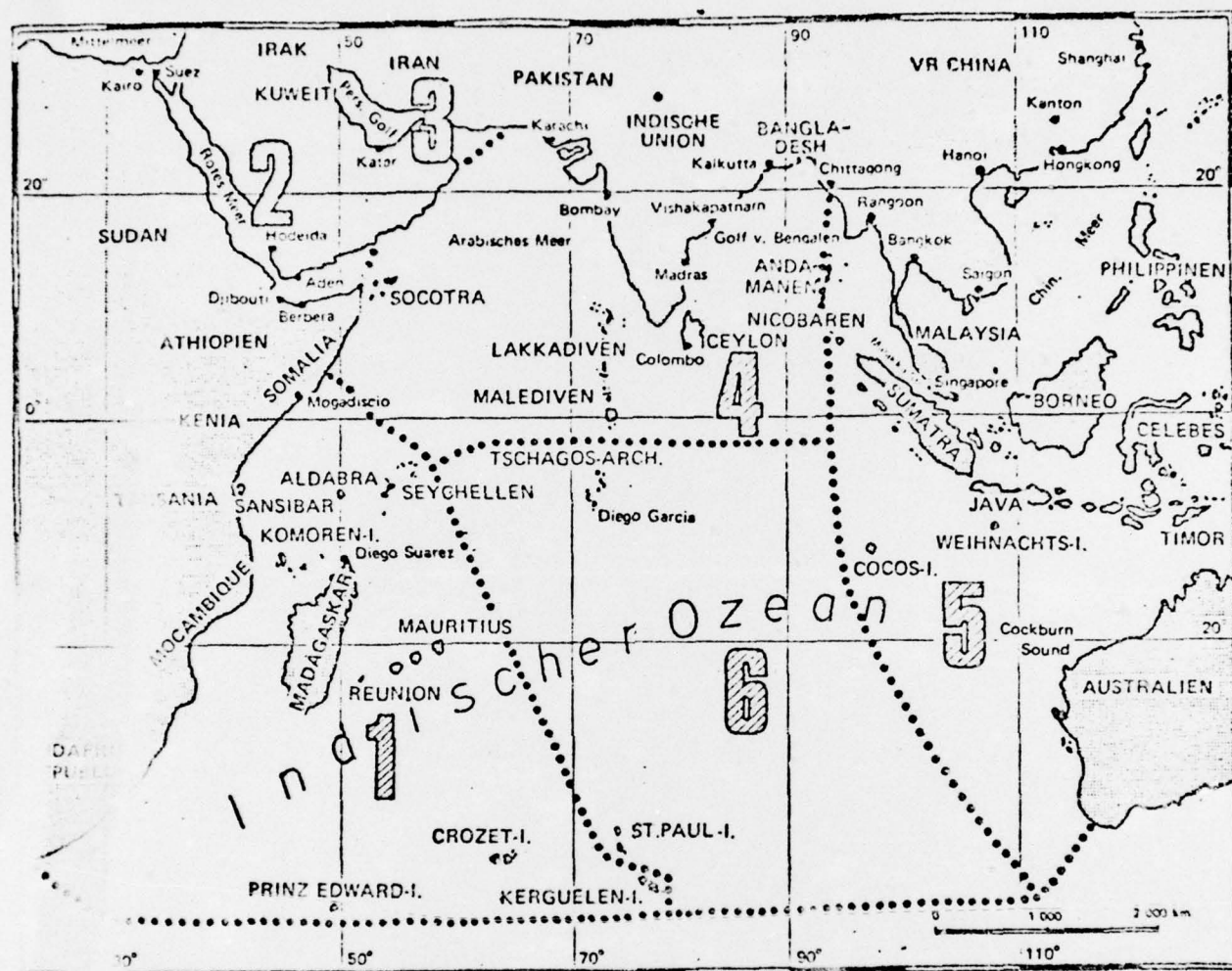
Among the new forces at work in this area, nationalism must be considered the primary force. Since Mozambique gained her independence, all East African coastal States have been free, and fit into the chain of independent countries in this area. The former imperial colossus has split itself into 30 independent States, along the coasts of Africa, Asia and Australia. Also, a number of islands, such as Madagascar, Ceylon, Mauritius and the Seychelles Islands, have become independent.

Still, a number of colonial vestiges remain, among them the British territories in the Indian Ocean, and Christmas Island (Great Britain), the Cocos Islands (Australia), Réunion (France), Kerguelen and St. Paul Island (France), and the Prince Edward Islands (South Africa). These possessions still play a significant role. It is significant that the imperialist powers have practically withdrawn from a territorial standpoint, but, thanks to their previous connections, enjoy - now as before - considerable influence in East Africa, the Middle East and Australia.

Of all the withdrawals, that of the British from the areas east of Suez is the most significant; of all new arrivals, the most important is the appearance of the Soviets in the Indian Ocean.

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With regard to the Indian Ocean States, one must consider two periods of time. At first, they were attempting to recover from the



devastating effects of World War II. In so doing, they sought help from abroad. Thus began a series of treaties and alliances, through which negotiations were conducted with distant powers and regional States. Due to the relaxation of international tensions beginning in 1972, and thanks in particular to the rapprochement between China and the U.S., the entire treaty-oriented power system has recently appeared so lasting that its effects can be felt in the entire area of the Indian Ocean.

Along with political power, three strategic factors influence the current phase of the power struggle, the chief factor being oil. The Indian Ocean is presently recognized as the area of the world with the greatest reserve of "liquid gold." Also of significance is the fact that more and more additional oil reserves are being discovered along the coasts of the Indian Ocean. This has stirred the national zeal of the coastal States, has attracted money and technology from abroad, and

has sparked vigorous competition and rivalry, influencing political behavior and strategic considerations.

The second factor is the accumulation of weapons for a host of reasons, including distrust between neighbors, due to the uncertainty of international life and due to ambition and power struggles; and just recently, the oil profits, which have turned the Middle East into the greatest ordnance depot in the world.

Thirdly, technology in the last couple of decades has changed weaponry almost beyond recognition. Jet speeds and rapid transport have diminished time loss and shortened distances, and have contributed significantly toward making possible the development of a global strategy which embraces the Indian Ocean as well. Long-range missiles deployed at sea can now be exploded in areas no longer isolated, and require serious consideration in national defense planning. Electronics has enhanced the unobtrusiveness and effectiveness of weapons of all types, and has opened up a great number of possibilities in matters related to defense and security.

In a vast area embracing over 75 million km<sup>2</sup> of land and water, over three dozen political entities have emerged, each with its own source of power. In addition, there has been a mass influx of foreign troops. A cluster of sensitive areas has evolved, with an interplay of powers (see sketch):

1. The Southwest Indian Ocean
2. The Red Sea zone
3. The Persian Gulf zone
4. The Indian subcontinent
5. Southeast Asia
6. The Central Indian Ocean.

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#### THE BALANCE OF POWER IN SENSITIVE AREAS\*

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\* Also see Hans Roschmann: The Development of the Situation in the Indian Ocean and Persian Gulf, in Wehrkunde 5/1973, p. 238 ff (Ed.).

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##### 1. The Southwest Indian Ocean

In East Africa, this includes the States of South Africa, Mozambique, Tanzania and Kenya. It also includes the islands of Madagascar, Mauritius, the Seychelles and Réunion (France), the Comoro Islands (France), the Aldabra Islands (Great Britain) and the Crozet Islands and Kerguelen Island (France). Since Portugal's withdrawal from



Mozambique, all neighboring countries have become independent. As for the islands, they have to some extent gained independence, but several still remain under foreign rule - with significant consequences. South Africa is the most powerful nation, although she maintains but a modest military establishment.

"Black against white" is the main regional problem, which, with Mozambique's independence, has grown still more acute. Guerrilla activity, supported by the neighboring black nations, will probably be intensified now. This has consequences, both with regard to local politics and the appearance of international powers on the scene.

Great Britain's traditional bonds with South Africa brought about the Simonstown Agreement of 1955. Since South Africa possesses some of the more important raw materials, she has close ties with America.

In the Ocean itself, the sudden emergence of independence movements on various islands was accompanied by changes in the presence of foreign States. France, which had a base at Diego Suarez on Madagascar, should henceforth have a small installation at her disposal, due to a new agreement signed in June 1974 and renewable annually. She could strengthen her base on Réunion Island, but, in view of the likelihood of opposition on the part of the island's inhabitants, is considering other locations, including Mayotte in the Comoro archipelago.

As a supplement to their bilateral treaties with Mauritius and the Seychelles, the British are considering a base of their own in the Aldabra Islands, which are among their territories in the Indian Ocean. Also under consideration are bilateral agreements between Iran and Mauritius and between Mauritius and the Soviet Union. India has sought close ties with Mauritius, and both countries are presently connected by a regularly scheduled airline.

China has nearly completed a railroad line in Tanzania, along with the best possible facilities in the capital city of Dar es Salaam. And last but not least, the Soviet Union has added a network of buoys from here to the Cape to her widespread political net; they are designed to serve as anchors and as aids to communication.

The entire area lends itself particularly well to a grand strategic conception. From its southern periphery, the strategist has a clear view of the vast expanses of three oceans, all wide open to navigation unhindered by land obstacles. From here, routes fan out to the Arabian Sea countries, the Indian subcontinent and Southeast Asia. And each of the routes can, under certain circumstances, be critically important. Presently, the tanker route between the Cape and the Persian Gulf is still indispensable; its value will remain undiminished, even if the Suez Canal is navigable again, since it is comparatively less vulnerable and can accommodate larger ships. From the high seas, wherein dwells



the island world, all of the coastal States can be brought under pressure. No wonder that in this area more foreign powers are now represented, and scrambling for a foothold, than ever before.

## 2. The Red Sea Zone

A narrow, 3100-km-long arm of the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea is boxed in by nine countries: Somalia, Ethiopia, Sudan, Egypt, Israel, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, North Yemen and South Yemen. Many of these countries gained their independence after World War II, but a small region, Afar-Issa, is still a French possession.

The leading role is played by the Red Sea itself. At its two extremities lie two of the most sensitive areas in the world, over which a whole series of wars has been waged. Aside from the fact that it has outlets into the Mediterranean Sea and the Indian Ocean, the Red Sea is well-known for its abundant, untapped natural resources, which appear to be the subject of impending discussions. The coastal strips are being rapidly developed. Here continents and civilizations meet and frequently clash - an historical process which continues to this day. Four wars between Israel and the Arab States have been part of this process. As matters stand, the territorial problems which form the heart of the current phase of the conflict remain unresolved.

The Arabs and Israelis, in their passion, have forgotten that the entire area is crowded with restless multitudes. Except for Israel, there has been a coup d'état in practically every country. South Yemen and North Yemen have waged wars and have both been involved in altercations between Egypt and Saudi Arabia. Somalia and Ethiopia have been involved in territorial disputes. South Yemen serves as a base for guerrilla movements for the liberation of the sheikdom of Oman and the Persian Gulf. In Eritrea, a guerrilla movement is demanding secession from Ethiopia, which is in turn in the throes of revolution.

Foreign nations are represented in different ways. The area is a depot for the heaviest and most highly developed weapons, sent in for the most part by the superpowers - to a certain extent also from Europe and China. Both superpowers have secured firm footholds. Compared to before, Russia's representation is now weak in Egypt, but she has gained a firm foothold at the opposite end of the sea, in South Yemen. With the exception of Cuba, South Yemen is the only Communist country outside of the Eurasian land mass. In South Yemen, Russia has bases at Hodeida, Aden and Socotra; in Somalia, she has bases in Mogadiscio and Berbera. The Americans must content themselves with a listening post at Asmara, and the French at Djibouti. /72

In a broader sense, the superpowers are really at a standoff in this area. For the United States, the area is important as a connecting link between her strongholds east and west of Suez. It encompasses

Israel and offers the possibility of gaining a foothold in order to win over the Arabs and their oil. For the Soviet Union, the area is important due to her influence in the Arab countries as well as the route to the Indian Ocean, not to mention her heavy investment in military and economic aid, which amounts to approximately 12 billion DM.

### 3. The Persian Gulf Zone\*

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\* This section has been edited, since the subject was covered in detail by the author in Wehrkunde, No. 11/1973, p. 553 ff., and by Rainer Kriebeln: "Iran and Her Military Problems," in Wehrkunde, No. 12/1973, p. 628.

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The Persian Gulf will remain a prominent, sensitive area as long as oil remains an indispensable fuel.

Development is progressing in two ways. Economic development is so rapid that tiny Kuwait now boasts the highest per capita income in the world. However, the economic boom was not accompanied by political stabilization. It is characteristic of this area, now as before, that nearly every existing government is the result of a coup d'etat.

It is quite apparent that Iran has emerged as the most powerful State on the Persian Gulf.

If we consider that nearly every country in this area is arming to an extent by far exceeding legitimate needs, we realize that the Gulf zone has become one of the largest weapons depots in the world. This has attracted foreign powers - thus the British are situated in Oman, the Americans in Bahrein and the Russians in Iraq.

As an access to the Middle East, the Gulf zone has seemingly decreased in importance, but otherwise has emerged as one of the decisive sectors of the Indian Ocean. It is no wonder that during the oil crisis the Persian Gulf was repeatedly spoken of as a potentially explosive area.

### 4. The Indian Subcontinent

The subcontinent boasts a splendid vantage point from which the Arabian Sea, the Bay of Bengal and the open seas can be observed. And on the subcontinent lies India, far larger than Pakistan, Bangladesh and Ceylon. In the knowledge that the ocean has largely determined her history and security, India has worked hard to develop her coastline, while at the same time strengthening her land defenses. On the coast have appeared shipyards, naval installations and bases.

And the increase in military installations in the Andaman Islands is indicative of a perspective. Bangladesh is on the verge of establishing statecraft, but Pakistan has yet to make progress in making Karachi an important harbor and base in its coastal development.

All four countries gained their independence as a consequence of World War II. Bangladesh was born of a civil war which still weakens that country. Pakistan has had repeated uprisings, and is presently occupied with protecting her territorial integrity against secession attempts in Baluchistan and in the Northwest Frontier Provinces. India is struggling hard, now as before, against secessionist tendencies. The entire subcontinent is beset with tension.

The history is replete with wars. Even after 25 years of independence, India and Pakistan still haven't ceased quarrelling. Up to now, they have waged four wars against one another, and the prospects for full normalization in the near future are dim. Thus both nations have begun arming on a grand scale. Once again, the spectre of an influx of weapons rears itself, and this is one aspect of foreign intrusion into affairs of the subcontinent.

For nearly two decades the United States has attempted - within the scope of her global strategy - to assist Pakistan toward parity with India, but these attempts have now fallen by the wayside. Russia, on the other hand, has become more firmly entrenched. The Indo-Soviet Treaty of 1971 brought both nations economically closer together. At the same time, it put them in a position to develop ties in the realm of security. To be sure, Russia has no bases in India, but by virtue of the treaty she can count on certain facilities in an emergency, provided she respects India. China's interests are aligned with Pakistan's, partly as a counterweight to India, partly because Pakistan represents an excellent back door, and also partly because of the prospects of securing a route from Sinkiang through Pakistan-occupied Kashmir, and on down to the Indian Ocean. A portion of this route has already been jointly constructed.

India is large enough and possesses enough natural resources and strategic advantages to be able to pursue her own interests in the Indian Ocean. To what extent she will do this in cooperation with another power remains to be seen. French Admiral Henri Labrousse expressed an interesting opinion. In his view, the future of this area is largely dependent on the relationship of India with three foreign powers: "the Strategic Triangle" - the United States, the Soviet Union and China.

#### 5. Southeast Asia

This area includes the States of Burma, Thailand, Malaysia, Singapore and Australia, and extends from the Asiatic landmass to the



southernmost reaches of the Indian Ocean. (The States of Indochina are, to be sure, part of Southeast Asia, but are not Indian Ocean coastal States). Australia is a continent in itself, and possesses vast, untapped resources, the remainder being a great world depot for tropical commodities.

Except for Australia, all the States of this area have been the scene of tumult, including coups d'état. Even now, many are still internally unstable. Revolts continually give Burma headaches, and the geographical divisions of Malaysia and Indonesia favor in the intransigence of opposing elements. Even Thailand, noted for its durable, flourishing history, recently had a revolt, through which the military regime was overthrown. But by and large, Southeast Asia is rather peaceful in comparison with other areas of the Indian Ocean, and is presently attempting to build a common market.

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This explains, at least partially, the recent ebb in military agreements in this region. SEATO, the Southeast Asia pact which ruled the area for two decades, is now only a ghost of itself, having no further military function. The defense alliance of the five powers - Britain, Australia, New Zealand, Malaysia and Singapore - lost its meaning after Australia decided to withdraw her troops from Malaysia and Singapore, and when Britain decided to reduce her commitments. The ANZUS Treaty remains in effect, but with attempts to reduce the importance of the Americans. As the Australian Prime Minister expressed it, these treaties are "mortally ill, questionable and transitional." Because of this, "neutralization" became a slogan in Southeast Asia, and a committee was appointed to lend concrete meaning to the word.

But neutralization is easier said than done. Southeast Asia presents a possibility of uniting Europe and Africa with the Orient, a fact which becomes apparent with the growing conflict over the use of the Strait of Malacca. Indonesia and Malaysia each claim this as a part of their territorial waters, navigable only with their permission. The United States and Britain maintain an important base at Cockburn Sound in Western Australia, and Russia has considerably strengthened her position in the Malay States. The fact that Indochina, where the ashes of war still smolder, lies only a stone's throw from there, makes the future uncertain, likewise with regard to the attitude of China. Due to its connecting routes and raw materials, Southeast Asia is very important to Japan, a fact which Japanese strategists have duly noted in their current, fourth defense plan.

#### 6. The Central Indian Ocean

This area is a watery waste with few islands and few settlements. But even a fleeting glance reveals the importance of its position: it lies at the focal point of all the aforementioned five large areas.



And in it lie the Chagos Islands, whose small size and barren soil belie their worth.

Diego Garcia is a small atoll and part of the British territories in the Indian Ocean, and also lies within this island group. Based on a 1966 British-American agreement, it was envisaged as a midocean link in a globe-encircling chain. But development proceeded slowly, and until just recently only several hundred men were stationed there. Certainly circumstances have changed, now that America has taken an increased interest in the Indian Ocean. The U. S. Congress has appropriated 75 million DM for the construction of a base. The additional money is intended, among other things, for the construction of longer runways for giant transport planes and possibly B-52 bombers, as well as for sophisticated electronic equipment in support of nuclear submarine operations.

#### MINOR AND MAJOR POWERS

Let us dissociate our observations from these individual aspects, and consider the ocean in its entirety. In that way we can distinguish two power groups, one a part of the area and the other coming from without.

It is natural that the approximately 40 States of the Indian Ocean are grossly unequal in power. Some are too small and possess only minor navies. Others are certainly larger, but are still in the early stages of their development and still have no naval forces worthy of the name. Still others are locally significant, but cannot be considered capable of playing a greater role. Against this background, one can surely conclude that, of the more than three dozen countries, only six are capable of exerting a relatively far-reaching influence on the ocean: Australia, Indonesia, India, Pakistan, Iran and South Africa.

Australia's navy is small; but it is well-equipped, with one aircraft carrier, four submarines, and naval aviation consisting of fighter-bombers, ASW aircraft and helicopters. It guards Australia's sea routes, conducts continuous ocean reconnaissance from Learmouth Airfield, and has established a long-range communications station in Cockburn Sound. In the ocean, it has a base in the Cocos Islands. With 10 submarines, 15 warships and a large number of other craft, Indonesia has the largest navy in the entire area; nevertheless, it is not battle-ready at the moment, even if Indonesia were to develop and improve it extensively in time.

India enjoys an exceptionally advantageous strategic position, and has made good use of it in rebuilding her navy. At the moment she has one aircraft carrier, four submarines and a number of destroyers and frigates. Vishakhapatnam is a newly-created shipbuilding and

seamanship training center. About 1800 km from the coast lie the Andaman and Nicobar chain, which are important outlying bases, and which lie near Southeast Asia and control the Bay of Bengal. Moreover, India has islands in the Arabian Sea. India's chief interest in the ocean lies in securing her sea lanes, particularly from a commercial standpoint; nearly all of India's exports and imports pass through the Cape Route or through Suez. And since the energy crisis, the sea routes through the Persian Gulf have been indispensable, because practically all of India's imported oil comes from there.

Despite her four submarines, Pakistan does not really have a battle-ready Navy, but it eventually could be. And she enjoys the advantage of occupying a favorable section of the Arabian Sea coastline.

Iran is a novice in this arena, with only a half dozen warships and no submarines; nevertheless, she is likely to make significant strides in this regard in the near future, thanks to her billions in revenues. Her bases in the Persian Gulf are among the strongest in the entire region. Iran's immediate interest is aimed at the security of the Persian Gulf, containing her fabulous oil resources. But the Shah has frequently spoken of his efforts to play a greater role in the Arabian Sea, and, in this respect, the recently concluded agreement between Iran and Mauritius acquires significance. South Africa, at the other end of the ocean, is a minor seapower, with her three submarines and less than a dozen warships, but overlooks the Cape Route and thus is of considerable importance.

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Already, this fleeting survey of the coastal States reveals that none of them has any particular seapower. Their naval air forces are not very modern, nor are they supported by their own construction capacity. In the arsenals of all the States of the Indian Ocean there are, all in all, no more than two dozen submarines, i.e., only half as many as China has. From this one can conclude that these powers possess only limited seapower, with exclusively regional significance. Their primary concern is self-defense, and they are most deeply concerned with the security of the sea lanes. On the other hand, two factors enhance the importance of their role: their strategic position and their relations - alliances included - with foreign powers.

It may be said that of the foreign powers neither of the oldest - France and Britain - has completely withdrawn from the area, although their presence is drastically reduced.

As a consequence of political changes in the western Indian Ocean, France has reconstructed her position. The 26,000-ton tanker CHARENTE was converted into a floating headquarters for the Indian Ocean, with Djibouti as her home port. A new command was formed, extending from Djibouti to Kerguelen Island, including intermediate bases. Its task is the defense of French possessions in that area, the security of oil

tankers en route from the Persian Gulf, and "showing the flag." It should also be said that France has concluded business transactions involving multimillions with Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Iran for the procurement of oil, and her ministers have openly declared that she prefers to look after her own interests rather than depend on the "condominium of superpowers."

The presence of the British in the Indian Ocean is pervasive. The numerous bases and ports which the Royal Navy once used have now dwindled to the Seychelles Islands, Gan in the Maldive Islands, the "British Indian Ocean Territory" and Mauritius, with which they have a defense agreement. Because of her defense arrangements, Britain has a right to be in the Persian Gulf and in the area of Malaysia, both essentially for the linkage with Hong Kong. Thus the British interests in the security of the sea routes, her heavy investments in the entire area and her alliance commitments.

One can expect that China, having deployed a submarine in the Mediterranean Sea (stationed in Albania), will strengthen her influence in the Indian Ocean, which is closer and more important to her security. At the moment, she is establishing a presence mainly in Tanzania, where she is completing the railroad between Tanzania and Zambia and building a naval base at Dar es Salaam. She has opened up merchant shipping. It is believed that, on occasion, she will use the Gulf of Tanzania to test missiles fired in Sinkiang. The use of the Indian Ocean as a test range for Chinese ICBMs has long and broadly been discussed in the Asian press.

None of these States has a real navy. France is to a large extent limited to the western Indian Ocean and is represented by a relatively small fleet with limited supply capabilities. The British bases are but a few specks in a vast ocean, with poor liaison and reduced strength. The weakest of all is China, with a single strategic link in East Africa. Only in observing the superpowers does the theater assume oceanic dimensions.

## THE SUPERPOWERS

### The Soviet Union

In order to be able to comprehend these dimensions, one must first of all examine naval power. We shall begin with the Soviet Union, which made her debut in the Indian Ocean in 1968. The first naval force consisted of a cruiser, a guided missile frigate and an ASW frigate of the Pacific Fleet. These ships visited Madras and Bombay, India; Karachi, Pakistan; Colombo, Ceylon; Basra and Umar Assar, Iraq; Bandar Abbas, Iran; Aden, South Yemen; and Mogadiscio, Somalia. Two other Soviet groups followed: one consisted of a guided missile destroyer, two tankers and one submarine tender of the Pacific Fleet, and traversed the Strait of Malacca; the other consisted of one guided



missile destroyer, two submarines and one submarine tender of the Northern and Baltic Fleets, came by way of the Cape of Good Hope. During the 1971 Indo-Pakistani War, the Soviets had more than 20 ships in the Indian Ocean, including submarines (one nuclear-powered), guided missile cruisers, guided missile destroyers, tankers, supply ships and tenders. At the time of the Arab-Israeli War in 1973, more than 40 units were sighted, including the helicopter carrier LENINGRAD.

Moreover, at any given time, the Soviets have about 100 merchant ships and 40 fishing trawlers in the Indian Ocean, many of which are better equipped for intelligence gathering than for fishing. Of the approximately 75 daily passages around the Cape of Good Hope, 10 are Soviet ships. The Russian merchant and fishing fleet is entirely government-owned, and frequently serves as Russia's first foothold in the countries of the Third World, bringing in weapons and supplies. Therefore, one must look upon the Soviet merchant fleet as an important strategic instrument.

The importance of the Soviet naval presence is viewed in various ways. On the negative side, it is noted that of all units at sea, only a small percentage consists of warships at any given time. For this reason, and also because of their tenuous liaison with their home ports and logistics organization, they lack the capacity to play a meaningful role. And it is also unlikely that they would consent to blocking the normal sea routes - partly because Russia's own navigation would be impaired, and partly because it would make the Soviet Fleet vulnerable elsewhere - in the Black Sea, for example.

On the other hand, it is contended that Soviet ships in large numbers deploy year-round in all parts of the ocean and make port calls worldwide. Should a conflict break out, they can be swiftly grouped and deployed to the scene. In each of the aforementioned large regions, Russia - because of some treaty or agreement - has established some kind of arrangement or taken preventive measures. And yet logistically they are not totally dependent on these bases. The Fleet operates in autonomous formations, accompanied by their own supply and repair ships.

In an interview in New Delhi, General Svyatoslav Kozolov, a Soviet World War II veteran, revealed the purpose of the Soviet presence in the Indian Ocean. He said that the Soviet Navy has no bases in this ocean, no rivalry with the United States, and no aggressive intentions. Nevertheless, he added, the Soviet Union has maritime interests in this ocean. Through the Suez Canal, she could secure a link between western and eastern Russia which would be less expensive than a land route within her interior, she could maintain contact with befriended nations such as Iran and Vietnam, and she could extend a helping hand to "progressive movements", which are at work throughout the area. Should an emergency arise, he declared, the Soviet Fleet would retaliate with all its might.



All of this is true, but it would be more appropriate to consider this presence separately, in the context of peacetime and wartime. In time of peace, the presence brings political and economical dividends, increased experience and the advantages of acclimation. It also makes possible continuous surveillance by various means, including satellites. Thus Russia has also been put in the position of being able to "show the flag" and can even exercise gunboat diplomacy, if need be. By her presence on the ocean, the Soviet Union presents a constant challenge to the Western Powers, and, with intercontinental ballistic missiles deployed aboard submarines in the Bay of Bengal or the Arabian Sea, poses a threat to China. It is a symbol of her growing and expanding power, her worldwide interests, and her claim to recognition as a superpower.

#### The United States

The United States is surely the greatest seapower, but has slowly asserted herself in the Indian Ocean. Her greater concern is with the ocean's flanks, i.e., the Mediterranean Sea, where she has heavy commitments as a member of NATO, and Southeast Asia, where she waged a protracted war and tried to maintain her numerous military alliances. Not until three years after Russia's effective penetration into the ocean did the Americans take note. Thus in 1971, when the Soviets had more than 20 warships in the area, the United States sent the aircraft carrier TICONDEROGA, four destroyers and a submarine of the Seventh Fleet into the southeast sector of the ocean. During the Bangladesh war in 1971, the aircraft carrier ENTERPRISE sailed into the Bay of Bengal, and during the 1973 oil crisis American units were conspicuously deployed near the Persian Gulf. Numerically, the United States is lagging behind; it is reported that in the spring of 1974 American warships spent 2109 days in the Indian Ocean, and the Russians - 8262. This does not include ballistic missile submarines, or oceanographic and space projects.

But that doesn't really reflect the strength of the American presence. One look at the bases and other installations reveals how favorably they are situated. Moreover, the United States has close relations with most of the important nations of this area - South Africa, Ethiopia, Saudi Arabia, Iran, Pakistan, Indonesia and Australia. The U. S. Pacific Command was reorganized, and now includes the Indian Ocean. And to this command POSEIDON nuclear submarines are assigned, capable of striking at Russia's heartland from the Arabian Sea.

From testimony before the U. S. Congress, and from other disclosures, it is not difficult to determine what America's aims are in the Indian Ocean. In western Asia alone, American investments amount to eight billion DM. Therein, and in the acquisition of oil, lies America's interest. The Americans recognize that their presence

constitutes a useful "diplomatic lever" and enhances their "political credibility." Also, they do not wish to abandon the area to the Soviets. The acquisition of bases is founded on the premise that ships cannot rely on support from distant bases, such as, for example, Subic Bay, in the Philippines, 9000 km away. The Americans want to ensure that the strategic value of the ocean's northern sector will not be lost to them in event of emergency. But, above all, the United States is a superpower, for which inclusion of the Indian Ocean into her global strategy is a foregone conclusion.

#### THE STRUGGLE FOR OIL

In addition to local, regional and global factors, forces are at work in the Indian Ocean which, albeit nonmilitary in nature, still have strategic value, for example, the population. Of the total /76 four billion people who inhabit the earth, more than one-fourth live in the countries of the Indian Ocean. And the latest U. N. reports indicate that the population increase (2.5% and 3.5%) in these countries is the highest. With few exceptions, they are all in a state of development, so that foodstuffs are the first priority. "Foodstuffs" means a supply of fertilizer, machines and equipment, all strikingly rare in this area. So it is no wonder that many areas are regularly overcome by famine, the forerunner of economic ruin and political instability, equally dangerous to the people affected and to those who base their presence on one pretext or another.

Natural resources are another cause of tension. It has been confirmed that of the 40 natural resources strategically most important for the developing nations, 20 come from the countries of the Indian Ocean. These include oil, copper, manganese, asbestos, cotton, jute and sugar. Gold, for which South Africa has an overwhelming monopoly, is not included. The most important, naturally, is oil.

Oil is not only the present but also the future "liquid gold" of the area. It has become apparent that the oil belt of the Indian Ocean not only skirts Southeast Asia, the Himalayas and the Middle East in a giant arc, but touches other places as well. Indonesia has already fallen upon rich oilfields. India made her first discovery off her west coast. There are indications of oil off Ceylon, Oman and South Yemen, and in the coastal regions of Africa. The oil concessions for these new areas are the object of strong rivalry between many nations and are already influencing the strategic picture - in Indonesia, for example.

But it is Middle East oil which has found its way into world economics and power politics in a way which, only a few years ago, would have been inconceivable. The Persian Gulf zone contains 70% of all the Free World's reserves, and at the moment delivers one-third of the world's annual production. Only there can the oil

output be substantially increased and thus assuage the increasing world demand. India and Japan are 90% supplied by the Middle East; Italy, 85%; Australia, 70%; Britain, 66%; West Germany, 62%; France, 51%; and the United States, 8%, not to mention other countries. As long as there are no additional alternatives in the fuel sector, Middle East oil will continue to be closely linked with world economics in general and with the balance of power in particular.

Out of the Third World, silently enduring, a Fourth World now appears to be emerging, which encompasses the oil-rich lands, which have achieved unbelievable prosperity overnight. This Fourth World consists of a meager handful of nations, but it is estimated that the Arab States alone should earn 200 billion DM by the end of 1974. This is bestowing enormous power on a few States, considering their status and responsibility, and is having far-reaching effects on the world economy. So it is no wonder that military intervention has been discussed, in case other means fail.

#### ZONE OF PEACE?

Increasing rivalry and militarization in the Indian Ocean have awakened much apprehension, stirred up extensive debates, and led to a series of proposals.

A popular proposal recommended "neutralization" of the ocean. What that meant was never defined, but it would essentially mean that no nation could rightfully exert its influence in this region, that no greater armed conflagrations could be waged, and that no massive military arms buildup, threatening security, would be permitted. However, the fact that some coastal States are arming themselves to the teeth is negating the idea of neutralization. If neutralization means that foreign powers must keep their place, then the strategist was correct who said, during a seminar in the United States, "The Indian Ocean is a free zone, which does not belong to any coastal or neighboring State by even the broadest interpretation of international precedence." He went on to say that outsiders would be guided by their own national interests.

A rather modest proposal amounted to converting the area into a nuclear-free zone. In an interview in New Delhi in October 1974, the Shah of Iran proposed that Western and South Asia be neutralized. This presumably means that no State in the area may join the "nuclear club", that foreign powers may not be given access to nuclear bases, and that nuclear weapons may not be deployed in this area. This has likewise not been received favorably, since some of the nations of the area have made impressive progress in nuclear technology and will not accept a discriminatory ban.

Since it is impossible to isolate the Indian Ocean and shield it from rivalry and strife, Singapore's Prime Minister proposed the



formation of an international peacekeeping force, and was supported in this by a retired admiral. This force would ensure the containment of conflicts and would curb attempts of various powers to gain a position of dominance. But who would form this force, what weapons it would receive and how it would be used - all are unanswered questions. Even in small theaters of war, such as Indochina and the Middle East, international forces have failed even in the most serious missions.

Spurred on by the interplay of power interests, and undaunted by the rejection of further proposals, the Indian Ocean States brought the matter before international tribunals. Acting on reports of the entanglements resulting from growing tensions in the area, the Commonwealth of Nations organized an eight-nation committee in 1971, which however adjourned without achieving anything. Several resolutions have been drawn up at the UN since 1966. Finally, in 1972, a 15-member committee was appointed by the UN to study the proposal to convert the Indian Ocean to a zone of peace. This committee was specially tasked with "compiling, from all viewpoints, a factual report on the military presence of the major powers, especially in reference to the dislocation of naval forces in connection with the rivalry between the major powers." This committee appointed a subcommittee consisting of three experts from India, Iran and Sweden, to do the research and to report thereon. /77

The report, submitted by the subcommittee in mid-1974, produced a strong reaction. All major powers stated that they had no bases in this area and that the facilities at their disposal served no military purpose. The minor powers declared that they had not given permission to build foreign military installations on their soil. In view of these protestations, the report was returned, and a revised, apparently whitewashed version published. Commentaries were not permitted, nor were inferences drawn. Burying their heads in the sand made everybody happy, but this did not erase the realities of the power struggle in the Indian Ocean.